

Hope Church ... (Easter Service)

- **Great to be here.**

Jess + and I come back to SA at least once a year ... and we travel to several churches raising support. We usually ask ourselves a question “Could we see ourselves as part of the church? (If we moved to the area...” Here at Hope Church, the answer is always ‘YES’.

Don't worry, we're not planning to leave our post in Zambia ... Just know that we enjoy being here.

- **Usually when we speak at churches, we like to give an update on mission work in Zambia ...** but today is a special service and we want to focus on the message of the Cross.

- There is 1 testimony though, that we're itching to share ...

- **You may / may not remember that Jess and I are part of a church planting project** and our role in the project has been discipleship of multiple churches.

5 years ago, God seemed to lead us to start a training facility for the leaders of these churches. This was the best way to disciple the province! And it's been an incredible journey.

About 2 years ago we faced a difficult challenge: Some of our leaders were crying out in frustration. “Our people don't speak Lozi (which is the main language of the province). When the Bible is being read in Lozi, they don't understand!” We don't have anything written in our language.

Strangely, at this time, we were randomly approached by Wycliffe Bible Translators promising support if we could start a translation project. It was all pretty strange but we suspected God.

We put months of hard work into surveying the entire province and found that 5 tribes needed Bible Translation. These are 5 of the most remote tribes in Zambia and probably in Africa. They are hidden in marshlands and among wild animals. They represent more than 100 000 people.

- **To keep a long story short, each tribe chose their 6 best representatives** to be trained as translators ... Then on the 5 March, we launched our first set of 12 x 3-week workshops. The 24 translators were also joined by what they called the 5th tribe, “Whities” exp. trainers sent by Wycliffe from four different countries.

It was quite a moment. Until now, it was Jess and I + 2 Zambian slogging for 18 months but now we were joined by 30 passionate workers. A few pics: This is the Kwamakoma translators writing their first ever story in their language. This is the Fwe Translators chosen by their elders. And finally, the Kwamashi group learning to type (after seeing a computer for the first time in their lives).

- At the first workshop, their job was to produce an alphabet and a writing system. Harder than it sounds!

- Classes would finish at 5 pm but there were so much energy among the translators, that we'd find them still working at 10pm. At the end of the 3 week workshop they published their first booklet which they would take back to their communities: "Recommendations and Suggestions for a Kwamashi, Kwangwa, Fwe, Kwamakoma writing system!" Again, it was quite a moment when they held it up and shouted in one voice, "Hallelujah!"

So how testimony fit in with Easter? The goal is to translate the Gospel of Luke in these 4 languages in the next four years. Four years from now, 100 000 people will be able to hear the Easter story and hear Jesus speaking their language through the Jesus Film.

There's some verses I'd like to share with you. If you have your Bibles, please turn to Matthew 9.

Matthew 9:35-38 (NLT) 35 Jesus travelled through all the towns and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the good news about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. 37 He said to his disciples, "The harvest is great, but the workers are few. 38 So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields."

When Neville asked me to share, I immediately thought of this passage. In the remaining minutes I want to share with you how these verses have come alive to me.

*Vs. 36 Jesus travelled through all the towns and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues and announcing ... **the good news about the Kingdom.** And he healed every kind of disease and illness.*

For me this was very encouraging.

As Zambia project, we have a vision to have a church within walking distance of very person = Huge Vision! No one knows how many churches will be needed. But it's could be about 5000! Try to imagine ... every time a church got planted, I had to walk a journey with the leader. I enrolled him ... advise them about running their church. Bear in mind that we have 70 leaders.

- Jesus travelled through all the towns and villages of that area. He had a vision to reach every community. I love the fact that it says that he announced "the good news". Sometimes we forget that it's good news... it's as if we need Easter more often.

- **The result?**

V 36. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless like sheep without a shepherd ...

- By now, the crowds have built up serious momentum
- Compassion ... (stood with them; had a strong feeling of sympathy with and for them...)

- **Illustrate this ... “In Zambia = many communities ... in many communities, there is a group who pose as a church but they’re not ... extreme false teaching, part of a cult based in Germany – mish mash ... forbidden to bring Bibles to church. One night ...**
- Sometimes, we feel this for others but it doesn’t always come easy!
- Bible reminds us that it’s a work of the H/S.
Gift of Mercy – Romans 12:8 “If you have a gift of showing kindness to others, do it gladly”
Very interesting ... in every case where it is said of Jesus that he had compassion, it is also said that he did something / he acted to help the person involved.
- Jesus felt compassion on them because they were confused and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. They may not seem harassed and helpless ... But without Christ, there’s something radically missing.
They don’t have his purpose in life; they can’t have a purified, clean conscience before God, and without Christ they have no hope of eternal life.
- Compassion – what did he do? He called his disciples together and taught them a lesson, made sure they understood something...

Q: Do we feel compassion for those around us in our workplace, in our community who don’t know Christ?

- Vs. 37 He said to his disciples, “The harvest is great, but the workers are few.
... One of the advantages is that the world of rural Western Zambia and the world of Bible ...
When it comes to harvest, it’s a pretty basic concept but I feel like being in Zambia has given us some insights. I’ll give you an example.
 - I remember one particular night while visiting a church leader ... it was the month leading up to the harvest
 - the village set up is such that the guys are really hospitable ... plate of dry rice and a big tin of apricot jam. I pretended to enjoy it.
 - I asked them to wake me up the next morning so I could help them in their fields ... wake up time is anywhere between 4-6 am
... the whole family, no one excluded from this height upwards.
 - We got into the fields and they showed me what to do tilling and weeding etc. I was like woops and the kids thought it was hilarious. Eventually I got into my rhythm and about 2 hours later I finished my 5x5 metre patch. I looked up and saw what still needed to be done. Serious commitment.
 - I know of church leaders who literally sleep in their fields to keep monkeys from eating their crops. They beat drums and burn fires to keep elephants away.
 1. Serious commitment to the harvest ... Harvest is Life!
 2. As a family we all get involved
(It would be a shame to sacrifice the harvest for a lack of workers).

Another interesting point is that a moment ago, Jesus saw the crowds as harassed and helpless ... now moments later he describes them as an all satisfying Harvest...

- **So what ...** so what has this got to do with me / with us. So what are we supposed to do about this.
- 38 So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields.”
- God has ordained that B4 experiencing a harvest we need to pray for it.
I’ve decided to pray everyday about it.
- Prayer strengthen your desire and your desire will move you to have compassion and witness.
- God will probably make you the answer to your own prayers. No arm twisting.
- Finally: two words ... Jesus travelled!